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ABSTRACT

In June 1993, the Quebec Commission d'evaluation de l'enseignement collegial (CEEC) was created to conduct evaluations of the assessment of student achievement and quality of college programs of studies in the province. This report presents CEEC guidelines for evaluating institutional policies for the evaluation of student achievement (IPESA's). Following an introduction to the CEEC and its focus on IPESA's, the regulatory framework regarding IPESA's in Quebec is described, indicating that colleges are required to adopt and implement an IPESA and submit it to the CEEC for evaluation. Next, the CEEC's approach is described, highlighting its guiding principles that students have a right to fair evaluation, that the quality of the evaluation depends on the quality of the instruments used, that institutional diversity must be respected, and that the evaluation of student achievement is an essential component of the teaching process. Then, the essential components of an IPESA are presented, indicating that an IPESA must include descriptions of: (1) the institution's goals and objectives; (2) the rules, methods, procedures, and measures used to achieve the objectives; (3) the roles and responsibilities entrusted to various individuals and bodies; and (4) the methods and criteria used to evaluate the implementation of the IPESA. The final section provides the CEEC's criteria for evaluating IPESA's, including comprehensiveness, coherence, and relevance; the rulings the CEEC may render, from entirely satisfactory to unsatisfactory; criteria for evaluating the implementation of IPESA's, including compliance, effectiveness, and equivalence; and information on the CEEC's evaluation report. (BCY)

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ED 369 435

# Evaluating Institutional Policies on the Evaluation of Student Achievement

General Guidelines

2410-0506

COMMISSION D'ÉVALUATION DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT COLLÉGIAL

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Québec

# Evaluating Institutional Policies on the Evaluation of Student Achievement

General Guidelines

2410-0506

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# Introduction

The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial was created by Bill 83, assented to in June 1993[1]. An autonomous, independent body, it is mandated to evaluate, i.e. "rule formally on, how colleges fulfil their academic responsibilities"[2] by evaluating the content and implementation of institutional policies on the evaluation of both student achievement and programs of studies.

This document describes the approach used by the Commission to evaluate institutional policies on the evaluation of student achievement (IPESAs). It also discusses the regulatory framework governing the Commission's mandate, the principles underlying its approach to IPESA evaluation, the methods to be used, the essential components of these new policies, and the criteria set by the Commission for evaluating IPESAs and their implementation in colleges offering programs leading to a Diploma of College Studies (DEC).[3]

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1. Act respecting the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial and amending certain legislative provisions. Bill 83 (1993, chapter 26).

2. MESS, *Colleges for the 21st Century* (Québec, April 1993), p. 40.

3. A separate document has been prepared for licensed private educational institutions offering programs leading only to an Attestation of College Studies (AEC).

# The Commission's Mandate

## 1. Contributing to the Renewal of College Education

The creation of the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial is an important measure contributing to the renewal of college education. It reflects the converging will of the Minister of Education, the colleges, and the vast majority of organizations and associations in college and socioeconomic circles to recognize the importance of college-level institutions in higher education and provide them with the tools they need to develop education at this level. As a result of the renewal, colleges will assume more responsibilities in this regard, and internal and external evaluation mechanisms will become more reliable and effective. Policy and program evaluation should improve the quality of procedures and, ultimately, owing to the critical reflection fostered by the evaluation process, raise the calibre of college education and make it more relevant. As the Commission fulfils its mandate to evaluate institutional policies and the implementation of programs of studies, the value of a college education and the diplomas colleges offer should receive greater recognition.

The Commission will contribute to the renewal of college education by conducting *evaluations aimed at guaranteeing and attesting to the quality of student achievement and programs of studies at this level.*

## 2. Evaluating IPESAs

In evaluating IPESAs, the Commission will seek *to certify the quality of student achievement evaluations while improving the process as a whole.* To do so, it will ensure that learning objectives and requirements for success are clearly defined and evaluable and that the methods used to determine whether these objectives and requirements have been attained are valid, coherent, effective, and clear.

This emphasis on the quality of student achievement evaluations will require that the objectives and standards for each learning activity be clearly spelled out, that the sequence of learning activities be precisely defined and that efforts be devoted to deciding what means are best suited to certifying that objectives and standards have been attained. As a result, both the learning process and student achievement should be improved.

Through the evaluation process, the Commission also intends *to win greater recognition for the value of college diplomas* by ensuring that student achievement is evaluated in a fair and equitable manner. This implies that the diplomas and education offered by the various institutions must be equivalent.

Stressing equivalence in the evaluation process, because it implies pooling objects, methods and instruments of evaluation, should enhance the reliability of the diplomas granted by the Ministry and eventually by the colleges themselves.

## Regulatory Framework

Student achievement evaluation must comply with the Act to amend the General and Vocational Colleges Act and other legislative provisions (Bill 82), the College Education Regulations,[4] the Act respecting the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial and amending certain legislative provisions (Bill 83), and ministerial decisions, all of which outline the duties and obligations of colleges :

- Each college must adopt and implement an IPESA[5] and submit it to the Commission for evaluation.[6] The policy must be in force by the fall term 1994.[7]

- The new IPESA must specify the means and criteria the college intends to use for granting equivalencies or exemptions and authorizing course substitutions[8] as well as its procedures for certifying studies, particularly when recommending that a student be awarded a diploma.[9] It must also include a comprehensive examination at the end of each program leading to a DEC.[10]

- Each college must enforce ministerial or institutional standards and rules pertaining to the pass mark, the transmission of results and the manner in which they are presented on the student report.[11]

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4. Footnotes to elements mentioned in both Bill 82 and the College Education Regulations will refer only to the pertinent sections of the Regulations.
5. College Education Regulations, s. 25.
6. Bill 83, s. 13.
7. Ministerial decision, September 15, 1993, paragraph 1b.
8. College Education Regulations, s. 21, 22, 23 and 25.
9. College Education Regulations, s. 25, 32 and 33; Bill 83, s. 13.
10. College Education Regulations, s. 25.
11. College Education Regulations, s. 27-31.

- Each college is responsible for ensuring that teachers draw up a detailed plan for each course including a description of learning objectives and the methods which will be used to evaluate student achievement.[12] The college must also adopt and make public a description of the objectives, standards and learning activities for each program it offers.[13]

The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial, for its part, must evaluate the IPESA formulated by each college as well as its implementation.[14]

- The Commission has declaratory power and the power to make recommendations. It must prepare a report on its findings,[15] send a copy to the educational institution concerned and the Minister[16] and make the report public in the manner it considers appropriate.[17]

- It may also recommend that a college implement not only measures aimed at improving its evaluation policies, programs of studies and the means by which they are implemented but also any other measure related to the organization, operation and academic management of the institution. The Commission may also make recommendations regarding government or ministerial policies affecting how the college manages its programs and evaluation practices.[18]

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12. College Education Regulations, s. 20.
13. College Education Regulations, s. 17.
14. Bill 83, s. 13.
15. Bill 83, s. 17.
16. Bill 83, s. 18.
17. Bill 83, s. 18.
18. Bill 83, s. 17.

## The Commission's Approach

### 1. Guiding Principles

- ***First principle*** **: students have the right to be evaluated in a fair and equitable manner.**

  Since the evaluation of student achievement has major consequences for students' lives, career choices and integration into society, the process must be equitable, i.e. accurately reflect course content, follow the proper procedures and involve equivalent methods even when the course under consideration is taught by different teachers.

- ***Second principle*** **: the quality of the evaluation process depends on the quality of evaluation instruments.**

  Those involved in evaluating student achievement must pay constant attention to evaluation instruments. While teachers may exercise their professional responsibility and have some degree of autonomy, they must carry out the evaluation process in the broader framework of institutional responsibility. Colleges, for their part, must assist and support teachers in fulfilling their duties as evaluators.

- ***Third principle*** **: the diversity of institutional practices must be respected.**

  Following the other general principles adopted by the Commission, this one asserts that quality and fairness in the evaluation process are possible within the diversity of institutional practices and the means being implemented. In other words, this means that fairness and equity in evaluation does not have to mean uniformity.

- ***Fourth principle*** **: the evaluation of student achievement is an essential component of teaching and the management of teaching.**

  Based on this principle, efforts to improve the quality of student achievement evaluation must become part of colleges' routine administrative and educational activities.

By affirming these principles, the Commission recognizes both individual and institutional responsibilities while stressing the need for fair evaluation practices and high quality, yet-nonstandardized, evaluation methods and instruments.

## 2. IPESA Evaluation Method

### 2.1 A Progressive Approach

The evaluation method chosen by the Commission is designed to be consistent with the procedures followed to date in evaluating student achievement. The Commission plans to consolidate past accomplishments while promoting the ongoing improvement of existing practices. It also recognizes that the objectives set by colleges in their IPESA will be attained gradually.

The Commission has therefore opted for a progressive approach. After evaluating the policies themselves, it will examine how effectively they are implemented during program of studies evaluations. This approach will enable it to see how student achievement evaluation changes in a variety of contexts, since it intends to evaluate the policy's implementation at different points in time in various programs offered by the college.

### 2.2 ...Based on Colleges' Own Evaluation of Their Evaluation Practices

Evaluation is an essential component of education and management. The Commission believes that no lasting improvements can be made without it. Therefore, it considers that the responsibility for conducting a critical examination of the validity and effectiveness of evaluation methods lies with those who implement IPESAs. The Commission favours an approach based on self-evaluation, whereby both individuals and colleges critically evaluate their own practices. This approach is consistent with the tendency to grant more responsibilities to colleges, a trend favoured by the renewal of college education.

Self-evaluation offers various advantages for both the colleges and the Commission. First, it enables the individuals and organizations affected by the IPESA to play an active role in the process aimed at evaluating the policy's implementation. Second, it fosters change within colleges by directly involving individuals in the critical evaluation of existing practices. And finally, it allows the Commission to better understand the context specific to each college and to take this factor into account in judging the institution's policy and making recommendations.

### 2.3 ...and Integrating the Exercise of the Commission's Mandates

While internal evaluation of institutional practices is an important part of the approach advocated by the Commission, it must be rounded out by an external evaluation of the policy's implementation to attest to the validity of the conclusions reached by the colleges themselves. This external evaluation may be conducted at different points in time in order to integrate the Commission's various mandates.

When the implementation of an IPESA is evaluated during the evaluation of a program of studies, it consolidates the link between student achievement evaluation and programs evaluation since it puts student achievement in its logical context, i.e. the more global perspective of the program itself. For both colleges and the Commission, the critical evaluation of a policy's implementation is much more concrete when carried out in the specific context of the program of studies related to the student achievement being evaluated.

An IPESA's implementation may also be evaluated when the Commission considers it appropriate or necessary to examine the policy as a whole or merely one aspect. This may occur, for example, when the Commission identifies certain problems during the evaluation of a policy statement or a program of studies. External factors may also dictate when evaluations are necessary: for example, the opportunity for evaluation may be rare in some colleges while others may request an evaluation when they make major changes in their policy.

When the Commission foresees the possibility that a college will grant DECs, it will inevitably evaluate the implementation of the IPESA as a whole. It will then require that the college submit a self-evaluation report and base its own conclusions, among other things, on previous evaluation of programs of studies in the institution. The presence of internal evaluation mechanisms and the quality of the results of this self-evaluation process will have a decisive impact on whether or not the Commission recommends that the college be authorized to grant DECs.

The Commission has therefore opted for an IPESA evaluation method which is progressive and ongoing. By first evaluating the policy itself, the Commission will be able to attest to the *reliability of the certification of studies*, i.e. to the presence of mechanisms which guarantee not only the quality of student achievement evaluations but also the validity of the procedures used to attest to their quality. By then evaluating the policy's implementation during program of studies evaluations and taking into account the college's own evaluation of the IPESA's application in the institution as a whole, the Commission will be able to confirm and guarantee the *value and quality of the students results which have been certified*.

## Essential Components of an IPESA

In keeping with existing policies and legislation, the Commission defines an IPESA as follows:

> *Official*[19] *document in which a college describes how it exercises its responsibility of evaluating student achievement in a fair and equitable manner and of publicly attesting to that manner.*

An IPESA must include a description of:

- goals and objectives;
- means;
- sharing of responsibilities;
- methods and criteria used by the college to evaluate how the policy is applied.

### 1. Goals and Objectives

The *goals* of an IPESA reflect the values, motives, and orientations which shape the way a college exercises its responsibility to evaluate student achievement in a fair and equitable manner and attest to that manner. They serve as a kind of a backdrop for the policy's objectives.

The *objectives* of an IPESA are the expression of the policy's goals and anticipated results. When formulated in clear, precise and realistic terms, they can be evaluated and will foster initiatives aimed at implementing the measures and other essential components outlined in the policy.

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19. Colleges may want to discuss specific aspects and their related standards and procedures in other documents (e.g. their English-language policy). However, their IPESA must be sufficiently clear, explicit and comprehensible and include *all* essential components.

## 2. Means

The means include the rules, methods, procedures and measures implemented to attain the policy's objectives. They are derived from the legislation and regulations pertaining to the evaluation of student achievement and with institutional policies and regulations.

### 2.1 The Rules Pertaining to the Evaluation of Student Achievement

These rules are dictated by the Ministry and, where applicable, by institutional procedures, norms and regulations of the institution.

1. The methods and instruments which are used to evaluate the learning objectives described in the course outline have been attained. More particularly, they include :

   - the methods and rules prescribed by the College Education Regulations for measuring and evaluating student achievement, determining requirements for success, and establishing the components of the grade;

   - methods and rules not formally prescribed by the College Education Regulations but commonly used to evaluate student achievement, such as for example, the presentation and linguistic quality of students' work, relative weighting of objectives and grades, the correction of work and exams, the revision of grades, etc.

2. The measures and mechanisms being envisaged to promote the development of equivalent evaluation practices within colleges.

   Such equivalence relates, in particular, to the methods and instruments which are used to evaluate achievement of different groups of students taking the same course. This equivalence of evaluation practices is also sought for courses in a given program and, generally, for all of the programs offered by the college.

### 2.2 Definition and Implementation of the Comprehensive Examination

According to one of the new provisions of the College Education Regulations, an IPESA must include a comprehensive examination. Although this provision will not come into effect until winter 1996, the Commission believes that it is important to determine as soon as possible what form the examination will take and how it will be administered so that students admitted in August 1994 and who will have to take the examination will be aware of its main features.

The Commission regards this examination as *a very different* evaluation tool from that used to evaluate the competencies acquired by students in individual courses. Essentially, it is designed to attest to a student's level of *mastery of an integrated set of skills* as a result of their studies in the program *as a whole*.

The comprehensive examination will be drawn up based on the objectives and standards set by the Ministry, the desired profile upon completion of studies of future graduates as defined by the college, and proposed measures for ensuring *interinstitutional* equivalence. This examination may take various forms and be given during a learning activity at the end of a program of studies. However, the evaluation and comprehensive elements of the examination must be explicit.

### 2.3 Terms and Conditions for Granting Equivalencies or Exemptions and Authorizing Course Substitutions

A new provision of the College Education Regulations stipulates that colleges must include a section on equivalencies, exemptions and course substitutions in their IPESA. This section must define the terms used, identify their field of application, set the conditions or criteria for granting equivalencies or exemptions and authorizing substitutions, and indicate the procedures to be followed.

### 2.4 The Process of Certification of Studies

IPESAs must also include a section on the certification of studies, i.e. the administrative measures used by a college to determine whether a student is entitled to a diploma. This process is designed to attest to the reliability of the institution's recommendation to grant a diploma. It applies to admission and registration requirements and the rules governing the preparation of programs of studies.

This section of an IPESA specifies the methods of verification to be followed, for each diploma granted, in order to ensure that the rules applicable to each of the following have been observed :

- the earning of a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) or the recognition of studies deemed equivalent;

- the setting of specific admission requirements for programs, and registration or re-registration requirements for courses;[20]

- the description of learning activities for the student's program of studies;

- the granting of credits and, where applicable, the granting of exemptions or equivalencies, or the authorization of course substitutions;

- the successful completion of the comprehensive examination and, where applicable, the uniform examinations imposed by the Ministry.

## 3. Sharing of Responsibilities

Responsibilities must be shared if the measures proposed in IPESAs are to be implemented. These policies must define the roles and responsibilities entrusted to the various individuals and educational and administrative bodies charged with applying them.

For efficiency and coherence, these responsibilities must be clearly and accurately defined. The sharing process must be complementary and well-balanced so that the responsibilities may be exercised harmoniously.

Several different bodies and individuals will have to share these responsibilities: teachers, departments, program committees, the academic dean, the academic council and the board of governors.

## 4. Methods and Criteria for Evaluating the Implementation of IPESAs

The Commission considers the description of the methods and criteria which are used to evaluate the implementation of an IPESA to be one of its essential components. This particular section of the policy will define the process and the means to evaluate the implementation of the policy which must also include a critical path to that process.

The Commission has proposed that colleges evaluate their policy using the same criteria the Commission itself employs to determine whether the actual implementation of the

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20. These rules are usually outlined in one of the college's regulations.

policy complies with what was written in the text, whether the measures effectively guarantee the quality of student achievement evaluations and whether the procedures followed for this purpose are equivalent and therefore equitable.

When evaluating the implementation of the policy as a whole in each college, the Commission will take into account the college's own evaluation of its performance. Each college will then have to submit a self-evaluation report to the Commission.

## Evaluation Criteria Selected by the Commission

The Commission has decided to use a relatively limited number of criteria during both stages of the evaluation process, i.e. the evaluation of the policy itself and the evaluation of how it is implemented.

### 1. Criteria for Evaluating the Policy

The Commission has chosen three criteria for this purpose: comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance.

- **Comprehensiveness**

This criterion will be used to determine whether the IPESA contains all the elements deemed essential by the Commission and presents them in a sufficiently clear manner. Special attention will be paid to the sections dealing with the elements prescribed by the College Education Regulations and the methods which the college plans to apply in evaluating its policy.

- **Coherence**

This criterion will enable the Commission to determine whether the various provisions of the policy are consistent and harmonious, i.e. to ensure that they do not conflict with one another. The Commission will examine at how the text has been formulated and organized, whether the relationships between and among its various provisions are logical and how well each provision has been explained.

- **Relevance**

This criterion will enable the Commission to determine whether the measures proposed in the policy are likely to promote the desired outcome and contribute to guaranteeing the quality of student achievement evaluations.

The Commission will use this criterion to evaluate all aspects of the policy, especially the means selected for evaluating student achievement and to provide evidence as to its quality.

## 2. Rulings

In evaluating an IPESA, the Commission may render one of the following four rulings:

1. *The policy is judged entirely satisfactory.* It meets all the criteria and, if all the proposed measures are implemented, should help to guarantee the quality of student achievement evaluations.

2. *The policy is judged satisfactory.* It meets almost all the criteria, but the Commission believes it can make useful suggestions for making the text clearer and more precise or for enhancing the relivance of the proposed means by which the policy's objectives are to be achieved.

3. *The policy is judged not very satisfactory.* It meets only some of the criteria and corrections must be made. It must be resubmitted to the Commission once it has been revised. If the changes are considered satisfactory, these will be verified during the evaluation of the implementation of the policy.

4. *The policy is judged unsatisfactory.* It does not meet any of the criteria. It must be rewritten and resubmitted to the Commission for evaluation.

The Commission will render its judgement in a report and send a copy to the college and the Minister. If need be, the report will contain recommendations for improving the policy and instructions as to what type of follow-up is required. The Commission will make the report public in the manner it deems appropriate.

## 3. Criteria for Evaluating the Implementation of the Policy

The Commission has selected three criteria for evaluating the implementation of the policy: compliance, effectiveness and equivalence in student achievement evaluation.

- **Compliance**

This criterion enables the Commission to determine to what extent the measures proposed in the policy are actually being carried out. It establishes the degree of conformity between what is written and what is done. In evaluating compliance, the Commission seeks to ensure that the measures being implemented correspond to those originally

adopted. If need be, this part of the evaluation will take into account any changes made by the college since the Commission last evaluated the IPESA.

- **Effectiveness**

This criterion will enable the Commission to determine how well the policy guarantees the quality of student achievement evaluations. More precisely, it will reveal to what extent the proposed measures, once they are actually implemented, ensure that student achievement is evaluated with valid, coherent, clear and effective methods and instruments.

This criterion will be used mainly to evaluate the methods and instruments used in evaluating student achievement (including comprehensive examinations, tests and assignments, and correction methods), exit profiles and documents certifying the granting of equivalencies or exemptions or the authorization of course substitutions.

This criterion will also used to assess the self-evaluation report prepared by the college. The Commission will seek to determine whether the college's approach has been rigorous and whether its conclusions are reliable.

- **Equivalence of Student Achievement Evaluation**

This criterion will enable the Commission to decide whether the measures and mechanisms proposed in the policy will help to produce comparable evaluation practices and results. It applies above all to the mechanisms designed to ensure that student achievement evaluations in a given institution are themselves comparable. It focuses, for example, on objectives (which are measured), requirements for success, requirements, levels of difficulty, and the weighting and application of correction criteria.

The Commission intends, for the time being, to limit the application of the inter-institutional equivalence of student achievement comparability criterion to comprehensive examinations set for programs offered by a number of colleges. In the long run, it may also apply the inter-institutional criterion to other measures and mechanisms used to assess student achievement.

## 4. The Commission's Evaluation Report

Based on the three criteria : compliance, effectiveness and equivalence of student achievement evaluation, the Commission will rule on the implementation of the IPESA as a whole. It will send a copy of its report to the college and the Minister. The report is then made public in a manner which the Commission considers appropriate.